San Francisco Examiner EDI

Monday, March 1, 1971

Lawyer Garry's Fanciful Plot

THE EXTRAVAGANT RHETORIC of Black Panther lawyer Charles Garry has been put down — ripped off, we might say — by a Harvard political scientist writing in the current New Yorker magazine.

In December 1969 Garry charged that 28 Panthers had been "murdered by police" in the previous two years. He claimed the police were executing a genocidal plot against the Panthers.

In the process of proving the falsehood of Garry's accusations, writer Edward J. Epstein of the New Yorker indicts the press and a number of public figures for disseminating the Garry claims without questioning their accuracy. Some of the indictment is certainly deserved.

At the time Garry made his charges The Examiner did seek to ask him for specifics. His office gave us the brushoff, saying he already had given the information to the Wall Street Journal.

The Journal subsequently reported that Garry had skinned the figure of 28 killed by police back to 19 who "died violently." He no longer blamed these deaths on the police, as well he could not, the record being as plain as it is. Only two — when Chicago police burst into a Panther pad — could conceivably be laid to questionable police practices.

The Examiner reprinted the Journal's account Jan. 3, 1970.

The New Yorker's article rebuts Garry in greater detail. It makes us wonder how incidents of Panther aggression against society or Panther crimes committed against fellow Panthers can be transmuted into a police mass murder plot, even by one of Garry's flamboyance.

MEANWHILE, we are left to ponder the happy lot of Panther Supreme Commander and Supreme Servant of the People Huey Newton, living in a $650-a-month Oakland penthouse pending his retrial for manslaughter in the slaying of an Oakland policeman. We can only say that if this is living dangerously, spread it around so the common people can have their share.

At the same time, Panther Chief of Staff David Hilliard is revealed to have a family (wife, four children) on welfare, supported by the very society Hilliard is intent on destroying. He appeared in court the other day (he's accused of threatening the life of President Nixon) to plead poverty and beg public funds for his defense. The money was granted.

Such is the strange half-world of the Black Panthers and their radical white supporters.

As for Garry, the public by now should be thoroughly familiar with his mastery of the fairy tale. His future pronouncements can be judged in that light.